
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2023

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2022



Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

Fire Fighter Training

Background

There are 836 fire departments in Iowa under the State Fire Marshal. Of this number, 783 are fully volunteer departments, 23 are fully paid fire departments, and 30 are a combination with at least one paid and one volunteer member. Iowa also has several industrial fire brigades, military fire departments, and private fire departments. There are approximately 16,100 fire fighters in Iowa, with approximately 14,500 (90.0%) being volunteers and the remainder being paid, or career, fire fighters. Some volunteer fire fighters are considered “paid on call,” meaning they receive modest compensation for responding to incidents. Whether the fire fighter is a volunteer or a career fire fighter, the State’s minimum training standards apply.

Volunteer fire fighters employed by State government, except those considered “essential personnel,” have a leave provision and job protection as a matter of statute (Iowa Code section [55.2](#)). This allows fire fighters to respond to fire calls with job protection. Iowa Code section [100B.14](#) provides volunteer job protection and prohibits a public or private employer from terminating the employment of an employee for joining a volunteer emergency services unit or organization.

Funding for Training

Most training is available at no cost to volunteer fire fighters. Funds are appropriated from the General Assembly and are used to provide training by the Department of Public Safety to volunteer fire departments upon request.

In addition to the General Fund appropriation for Fire Fighter Training, funding is provided from two other sources. The Paul Ryan Memorial Fire Fighter Safety Training Fund, established in Iowa Code section [100B.12](#), receives limited funding from a fee associated with special fire fighter license plates. The Volunteer Fire Fighter Preparedness Fund, established in Iowa Code section [100B.13](#), receives limited funding from the State income tax checkoff for fire fighters, as well as gifts, bequests, and donations.

Basic training is available from either the Fire Service Training Bureau located at the Iowa State University campus, or from partner community colleges. Funding is provided from the Fire Fighter Training appropriation. Volunteer fire fighters do not receive community college credit hours for volunteer service. Several of the community colleges in Iowa offer fire service degree programs, but these are degree programs requiring the payment of tuition and fees. However, as with any other college degree program, State, federal, and other financial assistance may be available.

More Information

Department of Public Safety State Fire Marshal Division: dps.iowa.gov/divisions/state-fire-marshal
Department of Public Safety Fire Service Training Bureau: dps.iowa.gov/divisions/state-fire-marshal/fire-service-training

LSA Staff Contact: Evan Johnson (515.281.6301) evan.johnson@legis.iowa.gov

Funding for Equipment

A General Fund appropriation of \$500,000 was made each year from FY 2004 to FY 2006 for the establishment of a \$1.5 million Revolving Loan Program for the purchase of equipment by local fire departments. The funds cannot be used to build fire stations. This Program provides interest-free loans with an origination fee of 1.0%. The fee is withheld by the Fire Service Training Bureau from the original loan payout and used to offset administration costs. A repayment schedule is established at the time the loan is awarded, with a minimum of two payments per year for the duration of the loan. Generally, loans of \$50,000 or less are repaid over a five-year period and loans greater than \$50,000 are repaid over a 10-year period. The maximum loan amount is \$150,000 and there is no penalty for early repayment. Applications are accepted annually in September and October.

Line of Duty Death Benefit

If the death of a volunteer emergency services provider occurs as the result of an injury incurred in the line of duty, a death benefit of \$100,000 is paid in a lump sum to the volunteer provider's beneficiary. The death benefit is paid from a standing appropriation to the Department of Administrative Services from the unobligated General Fund balance.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code chapter [80](#)

Iowa Code sections [55.2](#), [100B.12](#), [100B.13](#), and [100B.14](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [661](#)

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